

WASHINGTON
AND TIMES HERALD

New Surprise Due From Soviet Labs

By Marquis Childs

PARIS—Soviet Russian scientists and engineers are on the verge of another major breakthrough in the conquest of outer space. They have completed all preparations for launching Sputnik No. 4, which will contain a live animal, probably a dog, that will be returned to the earth along with the recording instruments in the nose cone.

This was learned from sources in Moscow believed reliable shortly before this reporter left the Soviet Union. It is, of course, the kind of information the Russians carefully screen by their censorship, since their policy has been to announce the successful orbiting of their sputniks only after this is an accomplished fact.

Those directing the earth satellite program are completely confident that they have solved the recovery problem and that a dog such as Laika, who perished in Sputnik No. 2, will be the first living creature to travel in outer space and return. If they are proved right, and a number of highly secret tests have prepared the way for the final experiment, then after a relatively short interval a manned satellite will be sent up.

IT IS POSSIBLE that the expected triumph of Sputnik No. 4 will be timed for National Aviation Day, which comes at the end of the month. Soviet citizens are constantly reminded of the edge that Russian sputniks have over those of the United States.

There is no doubt that satellite launchings have failed in the Soviet Union. Top specialists have admitted this privately. It is believed that the intention was to send Sputnik No. 3, weighing a ton and a half, aloft on May 1, which is a major Communist holiday, but the successful launching did not take place until May 15.

But with control of information as complete as it is in the Soviet Union, failures cannot be documented. The Soviet citizen—and the rest of the world—get only the news of the successes. These, beginning with No. 1 last Oct. 4, have been formidable.

The entire stress in Russian discussion of earth satellites has been on their peaceful purposes in the exploration of outer space. This ignores the fact that a launching device capable of sending a ton and a half satellite into orbit is obviously powerful enough to send an intercontinental ballistic missile many thousands of miles. The propaganda of peaceful research fits the main theme of "peace-loving Russia" standing out against the "warmongering West" powers.



Childs

Having seen something of the surface of Russian life, which is so often harsh, drab and primitive, the returning visitor must wonder how such a people have been able to forge so far ahead in this field vital to survival both in science and in national defense. The answer would seem to be twofold.

FIRST IS the capacity for concentration in a completely controlled society. The Russian people might like more automobiles and more television sets, not to mention more food and more clothes, rather than sputniks. But they cannot make their desires known except in the most limited way, and brains and skill and money are concentrated on what the Communist hierarchy believes to be an absolutely essential goal.

Second and probably more important is the fact that incentives, the practical incentives of cash and other material rewards, are at work in those fields on which the hierarchy wants to concentrate—notably in science, technology and national defense. This means more initiative, resourcefulness and even daring in such fields. The Soviet scientist with his big apartment (by Russian standards), his country place, his car and chauffeur and his comparative freedom to travel has good reason to work hard. What is more, he is constantly honored in public and he pays virtually no income tax because there is virtually no income tax in the Soviet Union.

That is why it is most unwise—a perilous form of wishful thinking—for the West to discount or dismiss claims that are carefully spelled out by Moscow, whether these claims have to do with sputniks or with future industrial productivity. And it is a little foolish to be startled each time some new announcement heralds another "first." We are likely to hear more of these and perhaps in the near future.